

Amendments of the Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the above-identified patent application.

Listing of Claims

1. (currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television program[[s]] using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

~~requiring~~ inputting a password for entering into the [[a]] master mode to obtain for obtaining access to [[all]] the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a criterion for blocking a television program from being viewed or recorded [[or]] and overriding a blocked television program to be viewed or recorded;

selecting a plurality of programs for ~~displaying~~ viewing or recording;

prompting [[a]] the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected plurality of programs meet[[s]] the blocking criterion and do[[es]] not meet the overriding criterion; and

unblocking the selected plurality of programs that meet[[s]] the blocking criterion and do[[es]] not meet the ~~overbidding~~ overriding criterion so [[it]] they can be viewed or recorded, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

2-9. (canceled)

10. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the password is established by a first-time user.

11. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the password can be changed by a user when in the master mode.

12. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the password can be changed by repeatedly entering an incorrect password for a predetermined number of times and confirming the repeatedly entered password at the end of the entering step.

13. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until a television configured to display the television program is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

14. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the parental control functions include a power-outage function to deny access to a television configured to display the television program until the password is properly entered, after a power outage.

15. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the criterion is entered in a normal television picture viewing mode using an on-screen menu.

16. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the criterion is entered in a guide mode using an on-screen menu activated from a program schedule guide.

17. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of entering a criterion comprises:

selecting a set of television programs to be watched or recorded in a babysitting mode; and

permitting only the selected set to be watched or recorded in the babysitting mode without inputting the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

18. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of entering a criterion comprises:

selecting a television program to be watched or recorded;

activating a first on-screen button to block the selected program if the selected program is unblocked; and

activating a second on-screen button to unblock the selected program if the selected program is blocked.

19. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of entering a criterion comprises:

tuning to a television program;

activating a first on-screen button to block the television program if the program is unblocked; and

activating a second on-screen button to unblock the television program if the program is blocked.

20. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of entering a criterion comprises inputting a parental control level and the prompting step comprises extracting a parental control rating from a television signal carrying the selected program, comparing the rating with the parental control level, and blocking the selected program if its rating falls below the parental control level.

21. (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the criterion is blocking or overriding a blocked television channel or television program.

22. (new) The method of claim 21 wherein the blocked or overridden television channel or program is marked in a parental control review list.

23. (new) The method of claim 22 wherein the step of entering a criterion comprises editing the parental control review list with respect to channel, date, time and length.

24. (new) The method of claim 16 wherein the on-screen menu includes a grid feature for blocking or overriding all television channels whether or not the channels are already blocked or overridden, a sort feature for blocking or overriding all television programs in a category, and a time feature for blocking or overriding by a time of a day or a day of a week.

25. (new) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing access to a predetermined set of functions specified in a user profile if the user does not enter the password.

26. (new) The method of claim 1, further comprising restoring the criterion after the user is no longer in the master mode.

27. (new) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:

- a microprocessor;

- a display screen;

- a parental control user interface displayed on the screen having different functions, for activating the microprocessor;

- means for inputting a password for entering into a master mode of operation to obtain access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

- means for entering a criterion for blocking a television program from being viewed or recorded and overriding a blocked television program;

- means for selecting a plurality of programs for viewing or recording;

- means for prompting a user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected plurality of programs meet the blocking criterion and do not meet the overriding criterion;

- means for unblocking the selected plurality of programs that meet the blocking criterion and do not meet

the overriding criterion so they can be viewed, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt; and

means for restoring the criterion after the user is no longer in the master mode.

28. (new) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

29. (new) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded, or overriding blocked television programs to be viewed or recorded;

entering a second criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded, or overriding blocked television programs to be viewed or recorded;

selecting a program for viewing or recording;

prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criteria and does not meet the overriding criteria; and

unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the overriding criteria so it can be viewed, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

30. (new) The method of claim 29, further comprising entering a third criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded.

31. (new) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a criterion for blocking a television program from being viewed or recorded and overriding a blocked television program to be viewed or recorded;

selecting a program for viewing or recording;

prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the overriding criterion; and

unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the overriding criterion so it can be viewed, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt, wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

32. (new) The method of claim 31, further comprising entering a second criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded.

33. (new) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a criterion for blocking a television program from being viewed or recorded;

selecting a plurality of programs for viewing or recording;

prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected plurality of programs meet the blocking criterion; and

unblocking the selected plurality of programs that meet the blocking criterion, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

34. (new) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;

entering a second criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;

selecting a program for viewing or recording;

prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criteria; and

unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion so it can be viewed, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

35. (new) The method of claim 34, further comprising entering a third criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded.

36. (new) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;
entering a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;
entering a second criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;
selecting a program for viewing or recording;
prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criteria; and
unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion so it can be viewed, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt, wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

37. (new) The method of claim 36, further comprising entering a third criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded.

38. (new) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:
a microprocessor;
a display screen;
a parental control user interface displayed on the screen having different functions, for activating the microprocessor;-

means for inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

means for entering a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded, or overriding blocked television programs to be viewed or recorded;

means for entering a second criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded, or

overriding blocked television programs to be viewed or recorded;

means for selecting a program for viewing or recording;

means for prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criteria and does not meet the overriding criteria; and

means for unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the overriding criteria so it can be viewed, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

39. (new) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:

a microprocessor;

a display screen;

a parental control user interface displayed on the screen having different functions, for activating the microprocessor;

means for inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

means for entering a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;

means for entering a second criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;

means for selecting a program for viewing or recording;

means for prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criteria; and

means for unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.